United Nations A/67/798

General Assembly

Distr.: General
18 March 2013

Original: English

Sixty-seventh session
Agenda items 20 and 26

Sustainable development

Agriculture development and food security

Letter dated 14 March 2013 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you the following information on integrated water resources management and the modernization of the water infrastructure in Uzbekistan (see annex).

I would highly appreciate it if you could circulate the attached information as a document of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 20 and 26.

(*Signed*) Aziz **Aliev**
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Annex to the letter dated 14 March 2013 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Water resources management and improvement of the water sector in Uzbekistan

Water is of crucial importance to the future development of Uzbekistan. Having recognized the social significance of irrigation and developed a sound national water sector policy, Uzbekistan has not only maintained its irrigation capacity since gaining independence, but also successfully modernized and improved its irrigation systems.

In the years since independence, Uzbekistan has made radical changes to the way it manages its water. Integrated water resources management principles, modern water-saving technologies, and automated control and management systems for water distribution have been implemented widely. Measures have also been taken, inter alia, to improve the technical condition of water facilities and the condition of irrigated land and to diversify agricultural production.

All these efforts are aimed at making more efficient use of water resources, ensuring a reliable water supply and improving the condition of irrigated land.

Further detail on the measures undertaken and the progress made in these areas is provided below.

Institutional reforms

The most important institutional reform in the water sector was the shift, in 2003, from an administrative and territorial approach to a watershed management approach in the management of water resources. This change has resulted in more efficient, stable and regular water distribution at all levels.

To ensure effective domestic water management and water supply to farmers, some 1,500 water consumer associations representing more than 80,000 water consumers and covering around 4 million hectares of land have been established and are operating successfully.

Integrated water resources management practices have been widely introduced. Uzbekistan is a recognized leader in this field, as confirmed by desk reviews carried out by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other international organizations. More than 120,000 ha of irrigated land in the Fergana Valley and 600,000 ha in the Zarafshan Valley are already under integrated water resources management, with the broad involvement of water consumers, and there are plans to extend it to another 250,000 ha in other regions.

Diversification of agricultural production

Since independence, Uzbekistan had made significant efforts to diversify its agricultural production. Instead of promoting water-intensive crops such as rice, cotton and alfalfa, the Government has encouraged less water-intensive agriculture,

with crops such as grains, gourds and melons, and the cultivation of orchards and vineyards.

Whereas in the late 1980s, cotton was grown on some 2 million ha, or 50 per cent of all irrigated land, that area has now been nearly halved to just over 1.2 million ha. Rice is grown on 40,000 ha of land, down from 180,000 ha. The remaining irrigated land is used to grow less water-intensive crops such as grains, food crops and other essential crops for communities.

Construction, renovation and upgrade of hydraulic infrastructure

The Government has earmarked substantial funding from its budget for the modernization and operation of water management infrastructure. Every year, it provides for the cleaning and repair of more than 5,000 km of trunk canals and 16,000 km of irrigation and flume systems in areas managed by water consumer associations and farmers, as well as more than 10,000 hydraulic facilities and gauging stations.

In recent years, some 1,500 km of canals and over 400 major hydraulic facilities and 200 pumping stations have been built or rehabilitated, and a total of 386,000 ha of irrigated land have been reclaimed.

As a result of these efforts, canals and hydraulic infrastructure have been improved and the water supply has been made more controllable and reliable, thereby reducing infiltration and technical water losses from irrigation systems.

Reclamation of irrigated land

The Irrigated Land Reclamation Fund was established and a national irrigated land reclamation programme for 2008-2012 was adopted by presidential decree in October 2007.

A State leasing company, Uzmeliomashlizing, was created to update the stock of reclamation equipment. In addition, 49 State enterprises specializing in reclamation and other water management activities were established.

The Fund has provided over $500 million to implement activities that include the construction, rehabilitation and repair of drainage systems. In particular, 3,127 km of collection and drainage systems, 809 vertical drain units, 156 drainage pumping stations and 1,422 observation networks have been built or rehabilitated, and 66,200 km of collection and drainage networks, 5,415 vertical drain units, 195 drainage pumping stations and 5,807 culverts have been repaired or upgraded.

This work has helped to improve the condition of 1.2 million ha of irrigated land, reduce the area of highly and moderately saline land by 81,200 ha and lower the ground water level on 365,000 ha, all of which will boost soil fertility and crop yields. In particular, the soil quality index is rising in Uzbekistan.

Water-saving technologies

There has been a particular focus nationwide on the development of water-saving irrigation technologies, including systems of drip irrigation and irrigation through flexible tubing or tape. In just the past few years, drip irrigation systems have been built and put into operation on approximately 10,000 ha. Irrigation

through flexible tubing or tape has been implemented on over 2,000 ha, primarily for irrigation of cotton plants.

The Government fully supports this area of development. There are plans to build a drip irrigation system on 25,000 ha of land between 2013 and 2018. By presidential decree, farmers and other land users will be given long-term concessional loans with a 5 per cent interest rate and these farmers will be exempt from land tax and other types of taxes.

Implementation of investment projects

Funding is being sought from international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the Saudi Fund for Economic Development, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund for International Development, the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development and the Export-Import Bank of China and from other donors in order to upgrade irrigation and drainage systems and modernize water facilities and pumping stations.

In the past ten years, more than $1.2 billion has been provided by international financial institutions for the upgrade of irrigation and drainage systems and the modernization of water facilities and pumping stations through 20 major investment projects in the water sector. This has increased the efficiency of irrigation systems, enhanced the technical condition of hydraulic structures and improved the controllability and cost-effectiveness of irrigation water.

Improvement of water use and conservation

Water intake for the country as a whole has decreased from 64 billion to 51 billion cubic metres per year since the 1980s. The specific intake from irrigation sources per hectare of irrigated land has decreased from 18,000 m3/ha to 10,500 m3/ha since the 1990s.

Water management priorities

To further improve and modernize hydraulic structures in Uzbekistan, plans are in place to build, rehabilitate or repair all hydraulic structures; implement antifiltration measures; improve the safety and reliability of major water facilities; and install automated controls in water facilities. In the area of water conservation, the aim is to implement water-saving technologies, promote water conservation, adopt new irrigation technologies and methods, further implement the principles of integrated water resources management and improve the day-to-day management of water resources. To build capacity, Uzbekistan will strengthen the physical infrastructure and provide equipment to water management organizations; upgrade the skills of water management professionals; make broad use of information resources in water planning and management; and increase the capacity of water consumer associations.